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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of eight developed both as resource guides to assist Wisconsin public schools in offering quality reading instruction and as models for improvement where there is a need for change. This third booklet offers a rationale for establishing local reading advisory councils and lists both the functions and limitations of such councils. Two methods are outlined for selecting advisory council members and suggestions are made for developing bylaws, selecting officers, organizing task forces, and restructuring or disbanding an advisory council. An annotated bibliography of resources for establishing an advisory council is appended. (AEA)

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Wisconsin
Handbook for Reading Improvement
Section C- Advisory Councils

developed by
Wisconsin Right to Read Effort

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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FOREWORD

The ability to read assumes added dimensions and relevance in a constantly changing world. There is increased national and state emphasis on improved reading instruction in public schools in response to changing needs. To equip learners to function effectively as adults in this climate of change, educators are charged with the complex task of offering instruction which will permit all learners to read to the limit of their potential.

The materials in this handbook are presented for two reasons: (1) to provide resources which will assist Wisconsin public schools to continue to offer high quality reading instruction, and (2) to provide a model for improvement where the need for change has become evident. The concepts and activities presented are representative of methods and approaches which hopefully will lead to a keener understanding and full-scale implementation of the components of an effective K-12 reading program.

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Wisconsin Handbook for Reading Improvement

- Section A- The National, State & Local Right to Read Effort
- Section B- Right to Read & the Community
- Section C- Advisory Councils
- Section D- Publicity & Public Relations
- Section E- Assessment
- Section F- Staff Roles & Responsibilities
- Section G- Inservice
- Section H- Volunteer Programs

Bulletin No. 8558

SECTION C

THE LOCAL READING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Introduction

In a democracy the participation of informed, intelligent and diligent citizens in matters affecting them is necessary. Public educational institutions and service agencies should exemplify the democratic process by encouraging and facilitating the participation of citizens. The primary function of a school-sponsored Advisory Council is to provide a means by which citizens may participate effectively in school affairs.

The community should determine the purposes of the school, which ultimately form the basis for policy development. Policies provide the guidelines which school administrators use in decision-making. Since the public provides both financial and moral support for education, they should also participate in policy development.

There are five basic policy questions which ultimately must be answered by citizens. They focus on the who, what and how of the educational system. Citizens may provide recommendations regarding the development of educational policy, but the legal authority for policy adoption rests with the Board of Education or other governing bodies.

Forming an Advisory Council is an important part of establishing a local Right to Read effort. An Advisory Council is a group of individuals working together toward the accomplishment of a common goal. The general goal of a local Right to Read Advisory Council is the elimination of illiteracy in the community it serves. "Community" could be defined as a public school district, the area served by a school building, a community college district, a city or town, or simply a classroom. Whatever the community, the Advisory Council membership should be as representative of the community as possible.

A local Right to Read effort which is dynamic, growing and responsive to community needs must necessarily encourage involvement of the people it serves. In addition, participation of the community in program planning and implementation can lead to greater support of goals and objectives. People tend to stand behind those programs for which they have a voice in the decision-making process. When selecting Council membership, try to choose those individuals who have the confidence of certain community groups. They will be able to carry program ideas to many people who will listen to them.

Advisory Council Roles And Functions

A local Right to Read Advisory Council has many functions:

1. Gathering information on the current status of literacy needs and resources in the community through an assessment or inventory process;
2. Disseminating information about the current status of community literacy needs and resources to the community and to specific institutions and agencies with special interests in literacy program development (Boards of Education, community colleges, social/welfare agencies, adult basic education centers);
3. Prioritizing literacy needs within a community;
4. Developing short- and long-range plans to meet specific community literacy needs;
5. Coordinating existing resources to meet community literacy needs;
6. If necessary and possible, initiating new programs to meet community literacy needs;
7. Asking educators to develop strategies on how they can help reach the goals established by the Council;
8. Monitoring the implementation of activities to accomplish objectives, providing continuous feedback for revision;
9. Evaluating actual outcomes against desired outcomes;
10. Coordinating the activities of its Task Force;
11. Communicating its activities to the public to gain increased support for and participation in the local Right to Read effort;
12. Maintaining an open channel of communication among the various groups, institutions, agencies, and educational systems interested in literacy program development.

Limitations

Listed below are limiting factors that should be kept in mind:

1. Do not expect all Council members to have the skills needed to complete the tasks outlined above. If the Council is truly representative of a cross-section of the community being served, an initial and ongoing inservice education program for members will be needed.
2. Avoid domination of the Council by special interest groups or by one cultural or economic group.
3. Observe federal, state and local laws.
4. Remember that the Board of Education or other governing body has ultimate decision-making authority for the educational program. Develop a process through which the Council can involve the Board and seek their support.
5. Be aware that principals and other building-level administrators are responsible for programs in their facility. Try to include them in planning and implementation.

Selecting Advisory Council Members

Members of local Right to Read Advisory Councils and its Task Forces are volunteers. They will give of their time and effort either because they feel that the requested task is helpful to someone else or because it is personally rewarding to them. A sense of accomplishment needs to be felt if people are to continue volunteering their services in support of a program.

Advisory Council membership will be determined somewhat by the composition of the community being served. Whatever the community, representation should be as cross-sectional as possible. People from different geographic locations, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages and sexes, and with varying opinions regarding community literacy services, should be sought. Below is a short discussion of various groups that might be represented on a Council or its Task Force.

Selecting Advisory Council Members—Method 1

Directions:

1. Choose a group of five to seven people to serve as a selection committee who will canvass the community for prospective Advisory Council members. Parents, school personnel, business leaders and senior citizens could serve on the selection committee. People from all walks of life should be considered for the Advisory Council.
2. Complete the table below to plan each step.

Activity	Beginning Date	Completion Date	Person Responsible	Outcome	Comments
1. Choose selection committee					
2. Write criteria for selecting members.					
3. Develop list of prospective Advisory Council members.					
4. Present a list of prospective candidates for consideration by the governing body of the agency that the Council will advise.					

Community organizations and agencies—It is important to have some Council members who are also actively involved in community organizations or employed by service agencies. Through their participation they can become more aware of services available from one another. Remember that members of organizations should be welcomed as individuals rather than official representatives of one group or another.

Social, racial, ethnic and religious groups—Every effort should be made to structure cross-population membership which in effect provides representation from all social, racial, ethnic and religious groups. It is awkward to treat someone as a representative of one of these population segments rather than as a concerned citizen.

Parents, nonparents, older citizens—Perhaps these members could also serve as representatives of another group. In any event, they should be included as prospective Council members.

Students—Students enrolled in secondary schools or institutions of higher and continuing education can be included on the Council. Student involvement, however, should not be restricted solely to officers of student government.

Instructional and noninstructional staff—Valuable contributions can be made by teachers, administrators and the supportive staff of an educational institution. Those with special skills and insights to offer the Council might be invited to participate.

Because each community is unique, the selection process must be carefully considered in order to obtain broad representation and, most important, the approval and sanction of those whom the Council will be advising. Two possible means of selecting and obtaining approval of Advisory Council members are given on the following planning sheets. The first method involves a committee to select prospective Advisory Council members. The second can be completed by the local Right to Read director.

Selecting Advisory Council Members—Method 1 (con't)

Activity	Beginning Date	Completion Date	Person Responsible	Outcome	Comments
5. Contact prospective members, determine their interest and explain the purpose of the Advisory Council.					
6. Submit for final approval the names of candidates who would accept appointment to the governing body.					
7. Notify those selected to serve on the Advisory Council. State the time, date and place for the first meeting.					

Selecting Advisory Council Members—Method 2**Directions:**

1. Send a letter explaining the purpose and intent of the Advisory Council to various groups in the community. Ask each group to recommend a member or members of their organization or population to serve on the Council. State the qualifications for prospective Council members.
2. Complete the table below to plan each step.

Activity	Beginning Date	Completion Date	Person Responsible	Outcome	Comments
1. Send letters explaining the Advisory Council and requesting the participation of groups throughout the community. The groups should represent different interest groups and socioeconomic levels. Include a list of selection criteria for membership.					
2. Compile a list of those recommended for the Council.					
3. Submit a list of nominees for approval by the administering body of the agency that the council will advise.					
4. Contact all people who were approved as Advisory Council members. Determine their interest in the Right to Read Effort. Explain the purpose of the Advisory Council. State the time, date and place of the first meeting.					

Developing Advisory Council Bylaws

Writing bylaws for the Advisory Council will help insure an organizational structure from which the group can operate efficiently. Although you may choose a small committee or working Task Force to develop the bylaws, they must finally be approved by the entire Advisory Council to be effective.

The bylaws should include information pertaining to the following areas:

1. Purpose and function
2. Membership and length of service
3. Officers and term of office
4. Meetings—time, place, etc.
5. Committees and Task Forces

Selecting Advisory Council Officers

At the first meeting you may wish to appoint temporary officers and wait until a later date before electing permanent officers. This will give the Council members a change to become better acquainted before they select their officers.

The offices you might consider establishing are chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. You may wish to select a publicity chairperson at the first meeting, too. Additional offices may be advisable depending on the needs and function of the Council.

After the Council is organized and officers are elected, a membership list with home and office addresses and telephone numbers should be developed. This will save time in communicating about upcoming meetings or emergency decisions and issues. The names of other people with whom the Council is frequently in contact could also be included.

Organizing Task Forces

After the Advisory Council officers have been elected, the Council should establish its priorities. Perhaps it will choose to survey preschool through adult literacy needs and resources and complete long-range planning procedures. Maybe it would rather establish a pilot literacy project.

When priorities have been determined, it is up to the Council to decide if the members themselves can and will do the work necessary to complete the objectives. If it is decided that assistance will be needed, Task Forces can be organized to accomplish a specific objective or objectives. Task Forces are working committees established on a temporary basis for the accomplishment of a specific task or tasks. A Task Force can be made up solely of Advisory Council members, or it can have other volunteers working on it. However it is organized, there should be at least one person who represents the Task Force on the Advisory Council to provide a communication link between the two.

Restructuring or Disbanding the Advisory Council

In some instances Advisory Councils may become inactive and necessitate restructuring or disbanding. Councils can fail because of:

1. Communication problems
2. Lack of leadership
3. Having to serve as a "rubber stamp" of the administration in instances where they do not have enough autonomy
4. Poor attendance at meetings
5. Lack of agreement on activities.

If this occurs but the Council is still needed, revitalization is imperative. Find out why the Council became inactive by talking to the various members. It may be necessary to replace some Council members. Remember that it is difficult to take a group of people who have not functioned well together and suddenly get them interested in working again. Here are some strategies that may be followed:

1. Phase out some members who have not shown interest. Be sure to be tactful if this is necessary.
2. Identify new population segments or groups that need to be represented on the Council.
3. Restructure the Council. Set up new Task Forces and abolish ones that have completed their task or have simply not functioned.
4. Remember all the weaknesses of the first Council and try not to repeat them.
5. Establish open communication among Council members.
6. Open up communication between the Council and the administration or governing body it is advising.
7. Make every meeting interesting and meaningful. Schedule a resource person for each meeting to give a short presentation. A Council member could be a resource person, too.
8. Be sure the members have a feeling of accomplishment at the end of each meeting.

If it becomes necessary to disband or restructure the Council, you will need to plan your activities. Write the steps you will follow in this endeavor. A sample objective might read: "By September 1, the Advisory Council members will be well acquainted and working as a group." Activities to accomplish this objective might be:

- a. Have the first meeting be a dinner meeting.
- b. Hold two subsequent meetings in a home of a member or in another informal setting.
- c. Plan a short get-acquainted activity at the beginning of the first few meetings.
- d. Be sure that each Advisory Council member has a chance to make a contribution at every meeting.

Checklist for an Effective Local Right to Read Advisory Council

Assure prospective members from the beginning that they will be involved in an activity which is going to make a worthwhile contribution to educational opportunities in literacy.

____ Send an official letter of appointment to each member signed by the top administrator, if possible. Include in the letter the kinds of commitment—advice, assistance, cooperation, money and time—that are expected of Council members.

____ Provide members, initially and on a continuing basis, with information about local, state and national trends in literacy and educational developments. This can be done through written reports, survey results, attendance at conferences and invitations for Council members to attend special school functions or meetings.

____ Clarify regulations which must be observed if a Council member decides to visit an educational facility during the day. Be sure to make him/her feel welcome as a friend and interested citizen.

____ Help members see that there is some linkage between their activities and what other local Right to Read Advisory Councils are doing throughout Wisconsin. Explain

the relationships between and among Right to Read programs at the local, state and national levels. Perhaps you could identify other local Advisory Councils who are involved in similar programs and share ideas with them.

____ Plan ahead for each meeting. Give members at least two weeks' notice of the meeting date and time. Send them an agenda, along with background information about problems to be discussed and their possible solutions.

____ Have the meetings conducted informally yet in a businesslike manner. Keep the meeting within reasonable time limits by holding discussions on target. As soon after each meeting as possible, let the members know the results of their advice and services.

____ Offer some concrete forms of recognition as an expression of appreciation for the volunteered services and contributions of each member. You could award certificates of recognition, hold an appreciation dinner or include the names of Council members in catalogs or reports.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ADVISORY COUNCILS

Brown, George L., Gerald E., et al, *Toward More Effective Involvement of the Community in the School: An Occasional Paper*. Institute for Development of Educational Activities, 1972, p. 24.

This document contains the result of a national seminar sponsored by the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. Participants in the seminar represented diverse interests and varied geographical locations. Representatives included senators, superintendents of schools, college professors, corporation executives, high school and junior high school personnel and school volunteer program personnel.

The United Nations defines community development as "... the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to the national progress." The above definition sets the stage for the rest of the contents of the publication. The topics discussed in the publication are as follows: 1) From Gripping About to Grappling With Citizen Involvement 2) Involvement of Community in the Public Schools: Where is it Today? 3) Thwarting Citizen Involvement 4) Parental Involvement 5) Talent Potential at the Local Level 6) Non-Threatening Intervention via School Volunteers 7) Businessmen and Industrialists in Education—The Friendly Giant 8) Producing Better Bakers and Candlestick Makers 9) Getting to Cause by Treating Symptoms 10) Taking Lessons from an Underdeveloped Country and a Few Government Programs 11) Summary of Recommendations.

Burt, Samuel M. *Volunteer Industry Involvement in Public Education*, Heath Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1970, 203 pp.

Industry's desire to assist in public education is motivated by several reasons. Foremost among them is industry's concern for an assured continuing supply of well educated and properly trained manpower. Burt cites arrangements where there are exchanges of personnel between schools and industry. These arrangements facilitate articulation between the educational system and industries.

Burt believes the school administration should initiate industry-education cooperation. The author points out that industry is willing to volunteer its financial and personnel resources as the ally of educators in improving, enriching and expanding public education to better serve the best interests of the nation.

Deshler, Betty and John L. Erlich. "Citizens' Involvement; Evolution in the Revolution," *Kappan*, November, 1972.

These two authors review the historical role of citizens' participation in decisions regarding education. They suggest that historically educational institutions relied heavily on the recommendations of local citizens. Recently there has been tremendous expansion in educational systems and the complexities of decision making. Consequently, decisions are now largely made by professionals. With increasing professionalization of American education, institutions are becoming unresponsive to the needs and aspirations of various communities within their systems. This has resulted in citizen demands for involvement in both decisions about education and the education process. Deshler and Erlich suggest that educators and citizens cooperate to develop viable educational programs.

Fusco, Gene C. *Improving Your School-Community Relations Program*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1967.

Working with organized groups can be an effective way of improving school-community relations. Two types of groups are discussed here: parent-teacher groups and citizens committees for better schools. The author indicates that school staff members must have knowledge about and participate in community life in order to make effective use of citizens advisory groups. The school administrator must bear responsibility for strengthening and supporting his/her staff to develop certain professional abilities that are essential in working with citizens advisory groups. Twenty professional abilities are listed.

Areas in which citizens committees have made great contributions are fact-finding, policy and program development and public support development. Specific problems in which citizens advisory groups are involved include 1) school system staff personnel; 2) school system organization; 3) pupil personnel; 4) educational programs; 5) auxiliary services; 6) school finance; and 7) school buildings. The publication has a checklist for recognizing committees with a high probability of effectiveness.

Hofstrand, Richard L., and Lloyd J. Phipps. *Advisory Councils in Education—A Handbook*. Urban Education Development Laboratory, University of Illinois, 357 Education Building, Urbana, 1971.

This 48-page publication gives a comprehensive but concise description of the initiation, establishment, organization and functions of school-sponsored citizens advisory councils and committees. This pocket-size volume is widely used in working with citizens advisory councils both in Illinois and other states. The publication contains samples of charters, operational guidelines, bylaws, selection committee resolutions, and candidate information form. Copies may be obtained to 50¢ each from Urban Education Development Laboratory, 357 Education Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Hamlin, H. M. *Citizens' Participation in Local Policy Making for Public Education*, College of Education, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1963, 34 pp.

This 34-page publication outlines the procedure for involving local citizens in promoting quality education. Hamlin stresses the importance of proper articulation between local, state and national educational authorities in making educational policy. He indicates that although Boards of Education have legal authority for making policies regarding public education, they need assistance from citizens committees. Policies regarding education are likely to be more effective if citizens share in their development.

Jackson, Shirley A., "The Curriculum Council: New Hope, New Promise," *Educational Leadership*, May, 1972, pp. 690-4.

Jackson suggests that curriculum councils offer new hope and new promise in providing a vehicle for constituent participation which taps all available resources in developing each child to his/her fullest potential. The author indicates that an increasing number of federally funded education programs are requiring evidence of community involvement in program planning and decision making. She suggests that persons affected by curriculum decisions should have a representative voice in making those decisions. Jackson argues that curriculum councils should be equitably representative of students, teachers, superintendents and board members, curriculum specialists, college representatives, industries and businesses, parents and other citizens in the community.

The article lists the potential contributions of each category of representatives. The contributions of parents and other citizens in the community include formulating goals and purposes of the school and providing valuable feedback on their aspirations for their children. The contributions of students include reactions regarding the relevancy of content, the effectiveness of presentations, learning problems encountered, purposes and desires relating to the curriculum being considered, and students' concept of the continuity of the program being presented to them.

King, Sam W., *Organization and Effective Use of Advisory Committees*, Vocational Bulletin No. 288, Industrial Education Series No. 74, Office of Education (DHEW) Washington, D.C., 1965, 83 pp.

This bulletin describes in detail the establishment, organization, and utilization of advisory committees. Numerous techniques for working with advisory committees are included. The author suggests that there is a need for more extensive use of advisory committees at the local levels. The chapter titles are 1) Need for Advisory Service, 2) Types of Committees, 3) Functions of Committees, 4) Establishing the Committee, 5) Organizing the Committee, 6) First Meeting, 7) Planning a Program, 8) Conducting the Meeting, 9) Follow-Up of Meeting, and 10) Effectiveness of Committees. The appendices contain samples of an agenda, minutes of a meeting, a letter from a principal to committee members, an outline for a committee handbook, policies and regulations, and a program for an advisory committee workshop.

Phipps, Lloyd J. and Kenneth Knell. *The How of Successful Citizens' Advisory Committee Operation*, Rurban Educational Development Laboratory, University of Illinois, 357 Education Building, Urbana 61801, 1968, 38 pp.

This document contains the results of a pilot study conducted in Illinois to develop and test techniques and procedures in organizing and utilizing citizens' advisory committees appointed by local Board of Education. The project was initiated on two premises: 1) ultimate decisions about public education in the United States are made by the citizenry; 2) intelligent, productive citizen participation requires people who are well-informed and who understand the problems faced by schools. The project was undertaken to determine techniques and procedures that were effective in preparing citizens to make intelligent decisions about educational matters.

The publication contains a step-by-step description of the procedures utilized in the study. Topics included in the publication are a brief history of the Illinois Citizens Education Council; Objectives of the Project; Organization and Accomplishments of Committees; Analysis of Successful Projects; Successful and Unsuccessful Procedures.

Also included are a number of recommendations from citizens advisory committees regarding 1) purposes of committees; 2) selection of members; 3) basic rules of operations; 4) affiliated committees; 5) school policy; 6) public information; 7) attitudes toward school; 8) undesirable activities and 9) inservice education. The appendices include a questionnaire for the chairperson of a citizens advisory committee, guidelines for the organization and operation of local citizens advisory committees and patterns for school-sponsored citizens advisory committees. Copies may be purchased at 75¢ per copy from the Rurban Educational Development Laboratory, 357 Education Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Phipps, Lloyd J. and Ronald W. Heisner. *Evaluative Criteria for Citizens' Advisory Councils and Committees*, Rurban Educational Development Laboratory, University of Illinois, 357 Education Building, Urbana, 1972, 32 pp.

This publication establishes criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of Advisory Councils. The instrument can be used for self-evaluation by the Council or as a guide for use by an external group. Utilizing this instrument, advisory councils may determine objectively their strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the overall impact of their activities. The tool may also be used by Boards of Education and administrators in assessing the type of leadership they provide for advisory councils.

The guide is divided into seventeen sections, each one concerned with one aspect of a citizens advisory council. Each section is supplemented by a checklist composed of specific items to evaluate. Although the evaluative guide is most applicable to school-wide advisory councils and committees, it may also be used to evaluate departmental advisory committees, vocational advisory committees or other specialized committees.

The publication provides guidelines for evaluating the following aspects of citizens advisory councils and committees: Charters; Constitution, Bylaws, and Operating Guidelines; Membership; Selection of Members; Relationship with Board of Education; Relationship with School Administration; Relationship with School Instructional staff; Relationship with Students; Relationship with Local Public; Meetings; Recommendations of the Committee; Morale of Members; Accomplishments and Activities of the Committee; Individual Activities and the Direction and Trust of the Committee. Copies of the publication may be purchased at 50¢ per copy from the Rurban Educational Development Laboratory, 357 Education Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Phipps, Lloyd J., Hofstrand, Richard K., and Shipley, Edward W., *Course of Study—Citizens Advisory Councils in Education*. Rurban Educational Development Laboratory, University of Illinois, 357 Education Building, Urbana, Illinois 61801, 1972, 227 pp.

Appendices include discussions on Do's and Don'ts for Citizen School Groups; Guiding Principles of Effective Citizens' Committees for Public Schools; Sample Charters; Sample Policy Statements; Checklist of Activities Provided by Advisory Committees. The publication is perhaps the most comprehensive course of study available on citizens advisory councils and committees. Copies may be purchased at \$1.50 per copy from the Rurban Educational Development Laboratory, Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 357 Education Building, University of Illinois, Urbana 61801.